

The Children's Response

TPR AND BEYOND

*T*HE CHILDREN'S RESPONSE IS BASED ON JAMES J. ASHER'S TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE method. TPR takes into account that people learn best when they are actively involved—and understand the language they hear. This is especially true of children who developmentally have shorter attention spans and need to wiggle.

Each of the lessons included in the text provides practice with specific grammatical patterns that are troublesome for young EFL learners. These structures are introduced through TPR activities to give young learners a measure of control over both form and function. After the students are comfortable with a lesson, teachers can work on the target structure through games and drills. It also helps to set out the props that are used in the TPR lessons in a place where children can work with them independently: this encourages peer teaching.

The grammatical points found in *The Children's Response* are the same grammatical points presented in many English as a second/foreign language programs

for children. Each grammatical concept is presented twice. Either or both of the lessons may be used, but it is best to use only one lesson during a class session. The first of these paired presentations requires no preparation and the simplest of materials: paper, pencil, chalk, or crayons. The second will require slightly more preparation, and in some instances you may need to bring items from home. A limited number of vocabulary items and a maximum of one idiom are introduced in each lesson.

How you use *The Children's Response* will depend on a number of factors, including the students' age, level of English background, and willingness to participate in a group setting. When children are shy about speaking, they may become less inhibited about talking after pantomiming or carrying out the action sequences.

How much oral communication you want them to do will depend entirely on the nature of the group and the individual children in it. Some children do not respond orally at first. Others mouth the words voluntarily when a sequence is being repeated a second or third time. You may begin by asking the students to say key words such as *walk* or *soap*, etc. It's all right to exaggerate and be dramatic. Don't be afraid to do the absurd because children enjoy and remember the ridiculous. They also like to play the role of the teacher, and these lessons make that possible.

Children will respond beautifully to the activities in this text if not pushed too hard. With a class of children of kindergarten age to Grade Three, you can use the first five steps of each lesson. With older children, you may use the entire lesson.

The first few times, follow the procedures, and then be creative. You may wish to use costumes or have the children write a story or draw pictures to serve as prompting cues.

Though Total Physical Response was originally intended to be used as an approach to teach oral English, it can also be used effectively to introduce children to the written language. Children learn reading and writing skills best when they are taught in a purposeful and meaningful context. Research has found that children learn literacy skills more easily when they are integrated or combined with oral skills.

The TPR lessons on pages 10–11 may be used as the basis for language experience stories. A language experience story is a group-authored

story written about a shared experience. Children participate in an experience, and then retell or “dictate” the story to you, their teacher. Children watch as you print the story. Children adore reading and re-reading what they have “authored.” When you write down words for them to read, it is a good idea to print using both uppercase (CAPITAL) and lowercase letters, because it is easier for children to make out the words in printed letters than in cursive writing; and printed letters are what they see when they work with books.

Teaching procedures

1. **Preparation.** Introduce the important vocabulary items.
2. **Setting Up.** Have students sit in a circle or other informal arrangement. Set up the situation in front of the students. For some of the lessons you'll just need to grab a piece of chalk. For others you may need to bring items from home. Talk about what you'll be doing, i.e., “I'm getting ready to draw a picture.”
3. **Demonstration.** Read the lesson while you do the action.
4. **Student Modeling.** Read the lesson while a student does the actions.
5. **Reinforcement.** Repeat step number 4.
6. **Total Class Participation.** Read the lesson and have the entire class carry out the instructions.
7. **Variation.** Change the lesson sequence.

Hints for teachers of children ages 5–8:

- Review vocabulary.
- Exaggerate the lesson with pantomime.
- Play with props.
- Use drills and games to reinforce the grammatical concept.
- Create your own sequence.

Hints for teachers of children ages 9–11:

- Have a student play teacher.
- Do a pictograph or written word record of the sequence.
- Ask more advanced students to do a sequence with less advanced or beginning students.
- Exaggerate the lesson with pantomime.
- Use drills and games to reinforce grammatical concepts.
- Create your own sequence.

Concept: Present Continuous I + You

Example of: I'm/you're walking/running/drawing

Materials: a pair of paper wings for a child to use

A Flying Bird

1. You're a bird.
2. You're going to fly.
3. You're walking.
4. You're running.
5. You're running faster.
6. You're flapping your wings.
7. You're flapping *and* running.
8. WOW!
9. You're flying.
10. You're flying faster.
11. You're flying slower.
12. You're tired.
13. Good, you're resting.



Concept: Prepositions

Example of: under

Materials: a table, chair, book, pencil, piece of paper

Under the Table or Chair

1. Pick up the book.
2. Put it under the table.
3. Pick up the pencil.
4. Put it under the table.
5. Pick up the book.
6. Put it under the chair.
7. Pick up the piece of paper.
8. Put it under the chair.
9. Pick up the piece of paper.
10. Put it under the table.
11. Put it under the chair.
12. The piece of paper is under the chair.
13. Pick up the crayon.
14. Put it under the piece of paper.



Concept: Regular Past Tense

Example of: I watched TV.

Materials: a picture of: house, phone, bed, light,
toothbrush, TV, book, a piece of chalk

Last Night

1. Draw a moon on the board.
2. Last night I walked home.
3. I talked on the phone.
4. I watched TV.
5. I brushed my teeth.
6. I crawled into bed.
7. I couldn't sleep.
8. I turned the light on.
9. I read a book.
10. I turned the light off.
11. I went to sleep.



Concept: Imperative Commands

Example of: hop, run, walk

Materials: none

Hop, Run, Walk



1. Hop.
2. Walk.
3. Run.
4. Jump.
5. Sit down and rest.
6. Get up.
7. Hop.
8. Walk.
- *9. Run.



10. Walk.
11. Jump.
12. Sit down and rest.

**If doing this indoors, your next command might be "Stop".*

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